



# THE ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE, AND PAST COMMUNITIES

## CORE CONCEPTS

This resource encourages learners to understand how climate change can lead to a changing landscape, and how this influences societies. The resource focuses on past climatic and environmental change, and how past communities have been affected. By having an appreciation for the changes that past communities have endured, provides the insight into how people have adapted to a changing landscape, creating a sense of empathy for past communities and hope for the adaptation of future communities in vulnerable situations.



## STATEMENTS OF WHAT MATTERS LINKS:

**HUMANITIES** – The resource enables learners to:

- enquire, explore and investigate to inspire curiosity about the world in the past.
- engage with their understanding that the natural world is diverse and dynamic, influenced by processes and human actions, where human actions in the past can affect interrelationships between the natural world.
- understand that human societies are complex and diverse, and shaped by human actions and beliefs.

The resource focuses specifically on concepts relating to **evidence, judgements, place, physical processes, cause and effect, and change.**

This resource is intended for **progression step 2**, but could be adapted for use at other progression steps. The resource contributes to progression by focusing learning on the following descriptions of learning for this resource.

## DESCRIPTIONS OF LEARNING

**HUMANITIES:** *I can form and express opinions about something that is important to me, considering my own ideas, feelings and those of others.*

*I have explored some causes and effects of events and changes in my community over time*

**EXPRESSIVE ARTS:** *I can communicate ideas, feelings and memories for an audience and for purposes and outcomes in my creative work.*

### GUIDANCE

Over time, landscapes are changed by geographical and climatic processes. We have lots of evidence that past climatic changes resulted in the landscape changing, and people had to adapt to that landscape change. Imagine your house suddenly flooding throughout the whole winter, your school getting buried in sand, or the local supermarket being under the sea. We have lots of examples in Wales where communities have had to adapt to a new landscape as a result of a changing climate. One of those examples is Sarn Badrig.

Sarn Badrig is a reef that extends 20km off-shore into Cardigan Bay and is composed of large, loose stones that have come from the Rhinog Mountains

and beyond. It formed between 15000 and 22000 years ago during the last Ice Age and believed to be a landform known as an esker (a ridge of rocks formed underneath a glacier). Today it is a great place for diving to look at the diversity of plants and animals that live there, and on a very low tide, you can even walk on the reef. Because the reef extends so far into the bay, it has caused problems for hundreds of boats throughout history, and as a result, there are lots of shipwrecks from the medieval period scattered along it.

Sarn Badrig would have been an excellent place for fishing and foraging for shellfish during Mesolithic times (12000 – 6000 years ago), as



A photograph of Sarn Badrig taken from an aeroplane. The reef extends 20km from the beach into the sea.

the sea level was lower than today at this time (perhaps as much as 50m lower than today). Over time, sea levels rose and the Sarn today can rarely be seen above the water. It is thought that reefs similar to Sarn Badrig are the basis of Welsh legends, in particular, Cantre'r Gwaelod. There are two other sarns in Cardigan Bay (Sarn Gynfelyn and Sarn-y-Bwlch). It may be that the tale of the King's servant who forgot to close the sea gates resulting in the loss of an ancient kingdom could be based on environment and landscape change. Why the landscape changed was largely due to sea level rise as the vast ice sheet of the last ice age melted. We now understand the causes and impacts of climate change, and we will need to adapt to a changing landscape as a result.



## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- 1 Introduce the idea of a Sarn (using the pictures) and discuss how people might have used these in the past.
- 2 Read the story of Cantre'r Gwaelod. Use musical instruments to create an atmosphere for the story (a soundscape). For more information on how to create a soundscape, visit: <https://www.literaturewales.org/our-projects/lwcommissions/tamar-eluned-williams/week-three/>
- 3 Listen to the story of Cantre'r Gwaelod (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=581GMGxbQ6w>), and discuss how the community might have felt during the different stages of the party:
  1. Living in Cantre'r Gwaelod
  2. During the party
  3. The Storm breaks.



A mesolithic family hunting in a forest 7000 years ago. Sea levels have risen, meaning that many of these ancient Welsh lowland forests are underwater.



Comisiwn Brenhinol Henebion Cymru  
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales